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A SERMON

PREACHED IN

BOW-CHURCH, LONDON,

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

PHILIP,

LORD BISHOP of *BRISTOL.*

On *Thurſday, June* 29, 1758.

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Fellow of TRINITY College in CAMBRIDGE;

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M.DCC.LVIII.

SERMON, &c.

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2 COR. iv. 5.

We preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord; and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus' ſake.

WHOEVER examines, with candour and ſeriouſneſs, the life and writings of this ſingle Apoſtle, can want no other proof of the Goſpel Diſpenſation; but muſt find himſelf, not only *almoſt*, but *altogether perſuaded, to be a Chriſtian.* So ſtrong was his prejudice of education in favour of the Jewiſh Law and Ceremonies, and ſo *exceeding mad* his perſecuting ſpirit, *againſt all that called on the name of Chriſt*; that when we ſee the ſincere inſtances of his conviction, his unconquerable reſolution to ſupport, and unexampled pains to preach and propagate the very *faith, which once he deſtroyed*, we cannot but join with the Churches of Judea, *to glorify God in him*; we muſt be ſenſible, and with pleaſure declare, *this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.* By His directions then and

faithful pattern, may not only *thoſe that are without, be led into the way of truth*; but We, who profeſs ourſelves *the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God*, may moſt perfectly learn our duty, and regulate our conduct; that *by taking ſuch heed unto ourſelves and our doctrine*, as he enjoins us, we may attain his moſt comfortable aſſurance, *of both ſaving ourſelves and them that hear us.*

In purſuance of this opinion, I have ſelected the paſſage above, as worthy of our conſtant imitation, and not improper for the preſent Solemnity. In my further application of which words, I beg leave to conſider,

First, — The intended purity of our National Church in this particular reſpect, that we her *Miniſters* do not *preach Ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord.*

Secondly, — The juſtice, with which we may call ourſelves the real *Servants* of our Country *for Jeſus' ſake.*

First then, — If Religion was of Civil inſtitution, and of no other conſequence to a People, than to promote order and ſociety, as a mere art of Government; it might moſt reaſonably be ſo contrived and modelled, as beſt to ſuit the ſituation, political ſtate, and temporal circumſtances, with which it was connected. The ſubtil and enterpriſing, with pretended myſteries, and fallacious doctrines, might blind the eyes of the ſimple and ignorant; might, by working on their hopes and fears, *make the people fall unto them, and thereout ſuck no ſmall advantage.*

But,

BUT, ſince the objects of our ſenſes proclaim aloud to us the Being of a God, and our powers of reaſon ſufficiently prove, that the Soul, endowed with thought and reflection, cannot die and moulder in the grave, like inert matter; but muſt remain with all its conſciouſneſs, to be diſpoſed of by the great Creator, from whom we received it: and ſince moreover, beſides theſe Natural lights and arguments, it has pleaſed the Almighty to inform our underſtanding, by the Revelation of his Will and Commandments, to bleſs mankind with the miſſion and benefits of his Son from Heaven, and thereby to lay before us ſuch rules of faith and practice, as he has promiſed ſhall entitle us to everlaſting life and happineſs: — With all this evidence and infallible certainty, if there be any, *that change Religion and the truth of God into a lye*; and for the ſake of worldly advantage, and maxims of State, *handle his holy word deceitfully*; theſe muſt ſurely be *Preachers of themſelves*, and inteſtine *enemies of the croſs of Chriſt*.

BUT thanks be to God, Our Church has long ago thrown off this yoke of bondage, and broke looſe from the fetters of ſuperſtition and religious tyranny; ſetting the conſcience of its members free from burdens and terrors they *were not able to bear*; and, rejecting ordinances of faith and worſhip of man's artful invention, has at length brought us out of Romiſh Captivity into the clear light of the Goſpel, *into the perfect law of liberty*.

WITH what joy and exultation muſt all view the happineſs of theſe our days, who turn over with due attention the

the Annals of our own Country, or compare our condition, in Church and State, with that of our preſent enemies, or other neighbouring Nations! Our Land is not now peſtered with ſwarms of falſe Teachers, *who went about formerly in ſheeps clothing, but inwardly were ravening wolves.* The community is not impoſed on with Relicks of Saints, nor made dupes to artificial miracles: the Holy Scriptures are not locked up from the reading and free examination of the people, nor the key of mercy and eternal life declared, or acknowledged, to be confined in the hands of any mortal man whatever. We do not live in the regions of deſpotiſm, nor under Princes that *rule with rods of iron*; but every one *ſits*, in quiet and ſecurity, *under his own vine and his own fig-tree; no ſpoiler in authority ſpoileth his goods*, nor publick *oppreſſor doth him violence*; his poſſeſſions and property, great or ſmall, he enjoys unmoleſted, and *when he goes down to the grave in peace*, he has, what is thought one of the greateſt of human comforts, the free privilege of *leaving his ſubſtance to his babes.*

Our religious tenets are not framed, nor our doctrines employed, to inculcate ſlaviſh notions of Abitrary-Power, with its train of deſtructive evils; nor would any member of our Body Politick more ſincerely, than the Gracious Head of it, diſcountenance and abhor them. We are not authoriſed to wreſt the Sacred Pages to *any private interpretation as men-pleaſers; but as faithful miniſters and diſpenſers of God's Holy Word and* undoubted *Sacraments*, we are to renounce by the expreſs commiſſion of our Office,

all the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs, but by manifeſtation of the truth, commending ourſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God.

NEITHER in the true conſtitution of our Church *is Chriſt divided; ſo that ſome be of Paul, ſome of Apollos, ſome of Cephas, and ſome of Chriſt*; but according to the injunction and earneſt requeſt of the Apoſtle, *we all ſpeak the ſame thing, are perfectly joined together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgement*; not bewildering our hearers with fancied myſteries of Grace, nor pretending to Inſpiration and ſupernatural gifts and powers; with which *ſome running up and down*, draw after them the unthinking multitude, *truly deceiving and being deceived*. For theſe men do not diſtinguiſh the times and perſons of the Apoſtles from their own; nor do they probably perceive the wonderful ſcheme of Providence, in ſpreading *the ſound of the Goſpel into all lands, and the glad tidings of Salvation unto the ends of the world*; how neceſſary it was in the infancy of Chriſtianity, to *ſet ſome members in the Church*, as St. Paul expreſſes it, *firſt Apoſtles, ſecondarily Prophets, thirdly teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diverſities of tongues*; and all this, *for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt.*

But ſeeing now, we are all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt; it would moſt evidently be ſuperfluous, nay injurious to the preſent

preſent foundation of our faith, to continue thoſe extraordinary aſſiſtances of the ſpirit, and conſequently multiply the Sacred Volumes; to the rendering the Word of Life extremely difficult, if not impoſſible, to be thoroughly known and underſtood. Whereas ſo ſufficient has already been the manifeſt interpoſition of Heaven, and ſo compleat have we received down the body of Holy Writ, that we may ſay with certainty, If any refuſe *to hear the Prophets and Apoſtles, neither would they believe, though one roſe from the dead*; and that whoever aſſume at this day, theſe immediate Illuminations and Influences, *are mere Preachers of themſelves, and do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power* and meaning *thereof.*

Nor do our Church and Miniſtry leſs diſclaim all *ſuch Preachers of themſelves*, if any there be, as may affect *curious and perplexing queſtions, which edify nothing*, but only tend to form a Sect, and unſettle the principles of ſcrupulous Chriſtians. Amongſt whom muſt thoſe likewiſe be included, as treſpaſſers of their commiſſion, ſhould any indulge a ſportive fancy, and in flowery elegance, or pointed rhetorick, ſtudy to amuſe and gain the applauſe of the *giddy and light-minded*, with airy criticiſms, buſy politicks, or ſuch-like miſcellaneous eſſays. For we are not ſent forth, by the terms and purpoſe of our charge, *to contend in excellency of ſpeech, or of man's wiſdom*, but to declare and explain *the teſtimony of God:* and for this ſelf ſame cauſe we are admoniſhed, at our entrance on the Prieſtly Office, " how ſtudious we ought to be in reading and learning the

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"Scriptures, and how we ought to forſake and ſet aſide, "as much as may be, all worldly cares and ſtudies."

FROM which arguments and well known truths, it muſt appear to all, who apply themſelves to underſtand the principles and practice of our Eſtabliſhed Church, that its ceremonies are plain and reaſonable, and its doctrines no other, than what perfectly conſiſt with, and may evidently be deduced from, the genuine letter and unſtrained meaning of the original Scriptures; the only rule of faith we profeſs, and the only guide of life we recommend, to *all who call themſelves Chriſtians*: not preſuming in the moſt weighty points of Salvation, *to preach ourſelves*, that is, our own conceits and fanciful interpretations, but confining our ſpeech and writings to the pure word and precept *of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord*.

SINCE therefore our wiſe Forefathers, at the Reformation, have ſo diligently ſettled the plan of our Religion, upon the certain and ſolid foundation *of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner ſtone*; ſurely ſo glorious an inſtitution, as that, which regulates and preſerves this purity, may well demand the publick ſupport and eſtimation: and it might be hoped too, that the Order of Men, ſet apart for the conſtant and uniform diſcharge of it, ſhould deſerve ſome ſhare of reſpect and reverence; and eſpecially in ſuch proportion, as we may ſeem, under my

SECOND Head propoſed, — To be the real *ſervants* of our Country *for Jeſus' ſake*.

As we moſt carefully draw our points of doctrine and rules of faith, from the living ſpring of Inſpired Writings; ſo in like manner do we adopt, or admit, no other Orders of Miniſters, nor other forms of Church-Government, than what thoſe very Scriptures ſuggeſt; and what the Holy Leaders of our Salvation appointed and uſed, as proper and neceſſary, for the purpoſes of duly inſtructing and well managing every Chriſtian community, in their ſpiritual affairs and intereſts. Nor does it ſeem eaſy, nor perhaps poſſible, to deviſe a better method than our own, for the direction and continuance of a National Religion, throughout ſo numerous a people. No greater care can well be taken, than our Church demands, in ſetting Shepherds over the Flock of Chriſt; no ſcheme of diſcipline can be formed more ſuitable, for the encouragement of our induſtry, and obligation to our duty, than the Apoſtolical ſubordination of our Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons; who are all required to acquit themſelves well, in a previous State of probation, proportioned reſpectively to their enſuing truſt; and, as that increaſes, muſt ſtrengthen their promiſes and engagements, before God and man, until they take upon them, (when thus honoured by his Majeſty's gracious favour and confidence) the moſt weighty charge, and moſt ſacred conditions of this day's Solemnity: a charge, that no man, I am firmly perſuaded, of religion or conſcience, ever enters upon, without a pious reſolution of duly performing it; and conditions, ſo expreſſive and binding, as none, but men of publick zeal, we may charitably believe, will lay themſelves under;

under; as none, but men of eminent abilities, can fully digeſt and execute.

FOR let it not be ſuppoſed, becauſe the Goſpel of Chriſt has been long planted in our land, and cheriſhed, by publick and private munificence, into fruitful maturity, that therefore it has nothing to fear: —— Happy for ourſelves and country, *were we in ſuch a caſe*; yea, with certainty might we pronounce ourſelves *a bleſſed people*, would all deſerve and embrace the ineſtimable benefit, *of having the Lord for their God!* But we cannot be ignorant, *Brethren, that blindneſs in part is happened to our* Nation. The pleaſures of ſenſe, and the allurements of gain, have ſo perverted the minds of many, *that ſeeing they will not perceive, and hearing they will not underſtand.* The calls of religion to temperance and piety, become firſt inconvenient, and then eaſily grow incredible. In ſhort, from various baneful cauſes, but eſpecially the ſhameful neglect of Publick Worſhip, *hardneſs of heart, and contempt of the divine word and commandment*, have taken deep root, and extended their malignant branches, to the undermining and checking the growth of the Tree of Life.

OTHERS there are too, who affecting novelty, and impatient of controul, would ſubvert the Diſcipline and Oeconomy of our National Church; and, by giving a looſe to their immoderate notions of Civil and Religious Liberty, would, I fear, reduce all back again to the lawleſs State of Nature: till theſe higheſt bleſſings of Society, theſe Golden Characteriſticks

ſiſticks of our own Country, would probably turn, by being abuſed, to our greateſt miſchiefs.

Now, if Reaſon, Revelation, and Example, can have joint authority enough to convince mankind of any thing, this muſt be an acknowledged truth, beyond all poſſibility of contradiction; that *righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, but ſin is a reproach to any people.* — And from whom may the Publick expect, the care and direction of this moſt weighty point, of its honour and proſperity, but from the Regular Miniſters of its Religion? To whom are the individuals, employed in various and neceſſary purſuits, to apply themſelves for inſtruction and advice, in caſes of faith and morals in this life, and in ſettling their hopes and difficulties concerning the next, but to the Teachers of thoſe Scriptures, wherein theſe grand truths are contained? For hereunto are we purpoſely appointed, *to preach the Goſpel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives of ſin, and recovering of ſight to ſuch as are blind,* with error and ignorance; *to ſet at liberty them that are bruiſed,* with the galling bonds of Superſtition or Enthuſiaſm; in ſhort, to explain and enforce man's duty towards God and Society; thereby promoting, *as much as lieth in us,* their temporal peace and eternal ſalvation.

And will any one deny the name of *Services* to theſe employments? Or ſhall we not rather ſeem, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, the real and neceſſary *Servants* of our Country, if, by the faithful diſcharge of our truſt, and by the happy ſucceſs of our labours, we may prove the inſtruments of awarding

awarding the diſpleaſure, and bringing down upon it, the bleſſings of heaven.

NOR are we without good reaſon to believe, that the Rites and Ceremonies, obſerved in our worſhip and uſage of our Church, have a diſtinguiſhed place in the divine favour and approbation, as well as a ſingular propriety and convenience for a Chriſtian People. And theſe are performed for the equal benefit of poor and rich, by our due attendance and miniſtration. All have open acceſs, and frequent exhortation, to the uſe of our Sacraments; all have the offices of Marriage, Viſitation in ſickneſs, Burial, and the reſt, without refuſal or diſtinction. So that although, *as the Lord hath ordained*, we, *who preach the Goſpel, do live of the Goſpel*; yet nevertheleſs, no well-wiſher to publick quiet and private virtue, no friend of Religion, nor ſerious examiner of our profeſſion, *will rob us of this boaſting*, that we are truly and literally, the *Servants* of our Country *for Jeſus' ſake*: and this aſſurance we have, that they, *who in theſe things ſerve Him, are accepted of God, and approved of men.*

BUT whatever may be the degree of utility, ariſing in general from our Order of Miniſters, conſidered as a Body; it muſt appear to be principally derived, from the Paſtoral Office and care, of our Biſhops, who are the Head of it. Their paternal zeal continually watches over their reſpective flocks, and the inferior Shepherds intruſted to feed them: their high authority commands our diligence, regulates our method, and corrects our miſtakes: their Commiſſion

miſſion and Service is no leſs than the guardianſhip, of the Chriſtian Religion, and the Engliſh Church; which they are to ſupport and adorn by their learning and piety; and by *committing the ſame to faithful men, who may be able to teach others alſo*, are wiſely appointed to preſerve the faith we profeſs, pure and undefiled, and to hand it down to our poſterity from generation to generation.

THUS, I hope, the two chief points of my text are ſufficiently proved; namely that *we*, the miniſters of the Church of England, do not in any ſenſe (conſiſtently with our profeſſion) *preach our ſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord:* and that we are the *Servants* of the community *for Jeſus' ſake.*

FROM the former of which an inference offers; — that ſince it has pleaſed the Divine Goodneſs, to let the glorious Light of the Goſpel ſhine upon our land in its brighteſt perfection, every inhabitant of it ſhould receive the bleſſing, with adoration and thankfulneſs; ſhould lay aſide diſſentions, that are founded only on trifles; and ſhould promote the harmony of our National Church, by holding the purity of its faith and doctrines, in *unity of ſpirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteouſneſs of life.*—From the latter article, I would take the liberty to obſerve, my Brethren, as our truſt and buſineſs are of the higheſt importance, ſo likewiſe ſhould our care and aſſiduity be exerted, with the utmoſt attention and conſcientiouſneſs. We have it in our power to *ſerve* our ſociety in the tendereſt point of all their concernments, even their preſent and eternal welfare. Therefore let us *not forget*, in our different ſtations, *to do good and to*

communicate; let us teach the ſimple, exhort the libertine, and comfort the penitent; and let us impreſs on all that hear us, a grateful ſenſe of their ſituation, in obeying the mildeſt and beſt of Kings, in living under the moſt perfect and proſperous Government, and being members of the moſt unerring form of Religion, in the whole world.

FOR this muſt ſurely conduce more ſucceſsfully, to the peace and piety of the whole people, to the making them happy, and ready to join their abilities, in the ſupport and defence of theſe exalted benefits; than by vilifying our own Country, and reflecting upon our times and Rulers: which ſome men practiſing, with miſtaken zeal, and ſplenetick rigour, do ſpread their notions amongſt the illiterate and inexperienced, to the hurtful diſcouragement of ourſelves, and the groundleſs ridicule of our Neighbours. — If our wealth and plenty have increaſed our articles of ſuperfluity, and brought in modes of living unknown to our Anceſtors, it will well become us, as Religious Guides, to enforce abundant charity in proportion to ſuch affluence. If we diſcover that our riches are introducing new vices and immoralities, with a decay of religion and virtue; it ſeems our buſineſs, (inſtead of reproaching the envied effects of our domeſtick peace and commercial induſtry) with pains and gentleneſs to diſſuade the ſouls committed to our care, from every dangerous imitation; to ſhew the reaſon and neceſſity of their being more mindful, and not leſs, of the bountiful hand from whence theſe favours are heaped upon them.

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In ſhort, whatever may be the perſuaſions of ſome few Cenſors, and whatever their inducements for open invectives againſt the commonwealth; nothing can appear more certain to general inquirers, than that *God hath not dealt ſo with any Nation:* nor is any thing more evident, than that we her Prieſts and *Servants* do then moſt faithfully *preach Chriſt Jeſus the Lord*, do then beſt execute our office, and moſt effectually anſwer the deſign of our appointment, when we plainly and ſtudiouſly ſet forth ſuch doctrines, as tend moſt clearly and extenſively, to promote the duties of contentment, unanimity, and religion.

In order to which deſirable ends, let us of the lower Clergy eſpecially, ſet the people a good example, of humility, obligingneſs, and ſubmiſſion to our Spiritual Governours: remembering always, that a dutiful regard, and reſpectful behaviour to our Superiors; our mutual love and friendly aſſiſtance of one another; our regularity of life, and diligence in our ſeveral truſts, will be the likelieſt means of ſecuring to ourſelves, the eſteem and favour of men; and of advancing, by the ſucceſs of our miniſtry, the *glory of our Father which is in Heaven.*

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